

‘Being an Islander’ - A Visual Anthropology Research Project.

Insularity as social construct and a form of social and cultural identity.

University of Cambridge / Fitzwilliam Museum. 2019~2023

<https://filmfreeway.com/BeinganIslander>

Production company: ArkLab Limited Producer: Dimitrios Bouras

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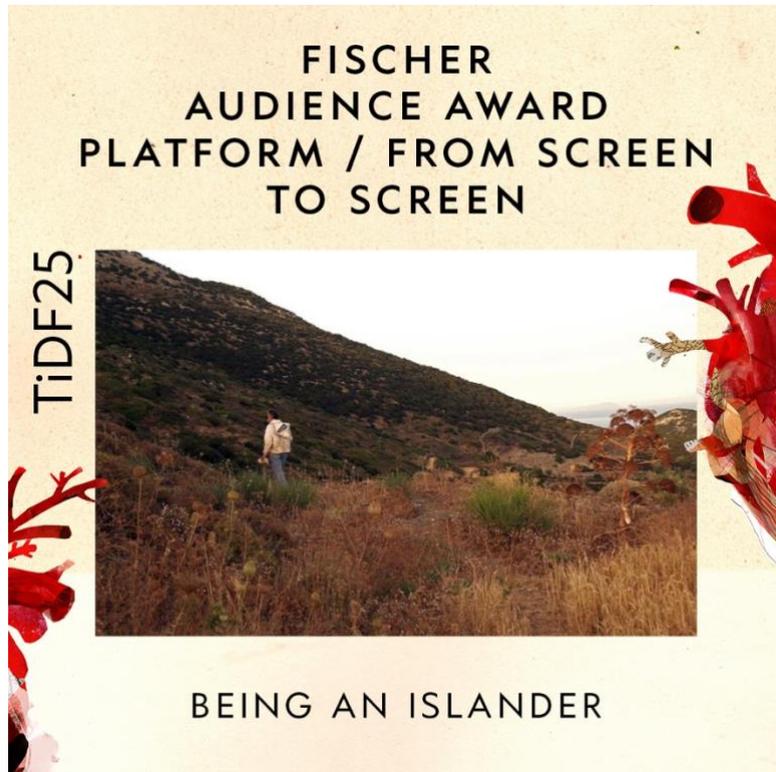
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THESSALONIKI
INTERNATIONAL
DOCUMENTARY FESTIVAL

FISCHER AUDIENCE
AWARD PLATFORM
FROM SCREEN TO SCREEN

TiDF25



Thessaloniki International Documentary Festival TiDF25 | 02 ~ 12 March 2023.
 "Fischer Audience Award"
 "Platform" (observational documentary) & "From Screen to Screen" (online projection).

• Additional awards as at: September 5, 2023



Indian Independent Film Festival.
 Kolkata, India May 2023. Best
 Documentary



London Greek Film Festival. London,
 UK.
 May 2023. Finalist



Bodén International Film Festival
 Bodén, Sweden
 May 2023. Semifinalist



PRISMA
 Rome Independent Film Awards
 May 2023,
 Best Feature Doc nominee



STOCKHOLM City Film Festival
 May 2023
 Finalist



Little Islands Festival
 Sikinos Island, Greece
 August 2023
 Honorary Selection

• **Title**
Being an Islander

• **Logline**

Insularity as social construct and a form of social and cultural identity. What does it mean to live in a touristic 'paradise' 365 days a year?

A journey through time, space, and human souls – those of the Islanders.

Through the narratives of the residents, a mosaic of different voices breaks through the monothematic images of a nostalgic Mediterranean, inviting us to unfold the coexistence of contrasts and convergences, the symbiosis of differences, reminding us of the value of human ties.

• **Director's Note**

The main characteristic of on-site anthropological research is that you live the place you study. You become part of the society, whose foundations you dig deep into, exploring its evolution and existing structure. All my previous research work was about the narrative and visual recording and representation of war, epidemics, and humanitarian crisis in general. This research work was a special challenge for me, for not to study the destruction of life by humans, rather its creation, evolution and the effort for the correct use, measure, and avoidance of destruction.

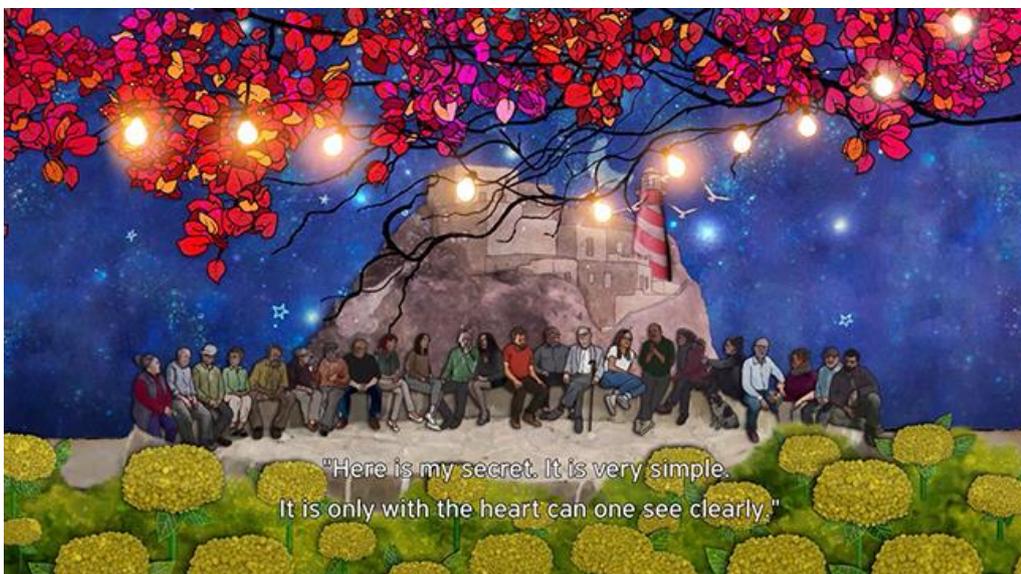
Through modern, multiple connections, internal "*closed social codes*", and multiple levels of memory, Sifnos unfolded before me. Aspects of time, through personal narrative, attest to a perpetual march of time. A geo-environment in constant motion of millions of years alters boundaries and geography reminding us, through the scale of time, how little we exist as a human species.

Opening the islands, we found the people inside of them. A tight-knit community structure in a constant state of transformation and societal evolution imposes its presence in the space. A public sphere, a subset of the planet with its self-imposed independence, full of convergence and contrast, a palimpsest of intersecting lives that connects in real time, multiple strata of memory and of oblivion, reminding us, through the remains of a different, past era (a prehistoric one), the precious lessons of respecting the space that offers us life.

It is the curves of nature, the coastline, the architecture. People and memory. A mosaic of different voices invites us to unfold the coexistence of contrasts and convergences, the symbiosis of differences and similarities, reminding us of the value of bonds. A prerequisite for understanding the vitally complex and unique insularity is the offering of time.

As the Fox said to the "Little Prince": "*Here is my secret: Only with the heart can one see clearly. What is essential is invisible to the eye.*"

Dimitrios Bouras



• Brief Synopsis

A journey through time, space, and human souls - those of the Islanders. Through the narratives of the residents, a mosaic of different voices breaks through the monothematic images of a nostalgic Mediterranean, inviting us to unfold the coexistence of contrasts and convergences, the symbiosis of differences, reminding us of the value of human ties.

Being an islander

It could be fate, choice
or mere chance.
Necessity.

And it is so romantic when one looks at it from afar.
But what does it really mean?

A piece of land, floating at sea for millions of years .

A heritage so deep and rooted and at the same time so fragile, that needs constant care and protection.

A perseverance that defies circumstances, foul weather, shortage and scarcities.

A discipline that balances off the extreme lightness and bliss of the summer with the darkness and solitude of the winter.

A perspicacity to know what is good development and what is a threat.

Being an islander is being a guard.

Of the past,
of the present,
of the frontiers,
tangible and intangible, alike.



• Extended Synopsis

Emerging from the geological past of the planet, the islands of the SE Mediterranean constitute a distinct example of continuous habitation of the space, from prehistoric times to the present day. The natural spatial boundaries defined by the sea have led to the development of strong community bonds through a 'closed code' of social acceptance – a distinct profile with 'particular' mythologies. At the same time, limited natural resources defined the proper relationship with nature, without the need to mediate a chatty ecological rhetoric.

Unique characteristics shaped habitation behaviors and ways of living, which present exceptional archaeological, anthropological, and environmental interest, while at the same time offering valuable lessons.

Sifnos, as a research model of insularity, is characterized by the constant alternation between locality and movement. The ethics of reuse and the choices of a development that endangers the carrying capacity, the limits, but also the real needs of the place, are reshaping human geography. As physical and social space define each other, the lives of the residents are characterized by the constant striving that pushes these idiosyncratic communities towards erudition.

The sea, either through the geological past or through modern, multiple connections, constantly redefines the sense of the island's borders, thus creating inter-island passages with complex social and cultural networks of exchange and mobility. It seems to shape the inhabitants over time, through the forced emigrations and repatriations, smoothing the internal "closed social codes" leading the society to welcome what can mean otherness.

The agricultural land, the water element, and the experiential relationship with the place, will also determine the development of traditional professions on the island of Sifnos, with pottery and seafaring being a dominant factor in social and economic transformations. The utilitarian character of popular island art will follow and, in turn, the evolution of rural society, taking on new forms of prosperity. The spread of tourism and the monopolization of the island economy will bring about new shapes in island identity.

The one-dimensional perception that the islands are a privileged holiday paradise, removes from the body of insularity the versatility that belongs to it. Understanding the insular phenomenon and its uniqueness requires to devote time.

The documentary seeks to make visible the composition of the multifaceted forces that contributed to the diversity and multiple levels of memory of this human ecosystem. The present project attempts to break through the monothematic images of a nostalgic (touristic) Mediterranean and to give space to the narratives of its inhabitants. The polyphony of the islanders reminds us that the Aegean is not a picturesque outpost, the islands do not constitute a a delightful cloud-cuckoo-land (*Nephelocokygia*), they do not describe an abstraction of the "social". A mosaic of different voices invites us to unfold with it the coexistence of contrasts and convergences, the symbiosis of differences and similarities, reminding us of the value of bonds.

Dr. Dimitrios Bouras
Director,
Principal Researcher, Anthropology.

• Brief Project Analysis

A Visual Anthropology research film, which is an integral part of the research project “Being an Islander”: Art and Identity of the Large Mediterranean Islands (2500 BCE-300 CE) (2019-2023) with a major exhibition opening in February 2023 and will run until June 2023 at the Fitzwilliam Museum / University of Cambridge, UK. Created by Dr. Dimitrios Boura, researcher social anthropologist, and filmmaker, and Dr. Anastasia Christofilopoulou, Curator of Greek, Cypriot and Roman Antiquities at the Fitzwilliam Museum

* More information about the exhibition and the wider programme: <https://www.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/visit-us/exhibitions/islanders> as well as <https://islander.fitzmuseum.cam.ac.uk/>

The production of the documentary is the most creative and authentic result of the program, both at the level of research and public participation. Museums rarely make documentaries, and when they do, they are usually single-theme and promote a particular exhibition.

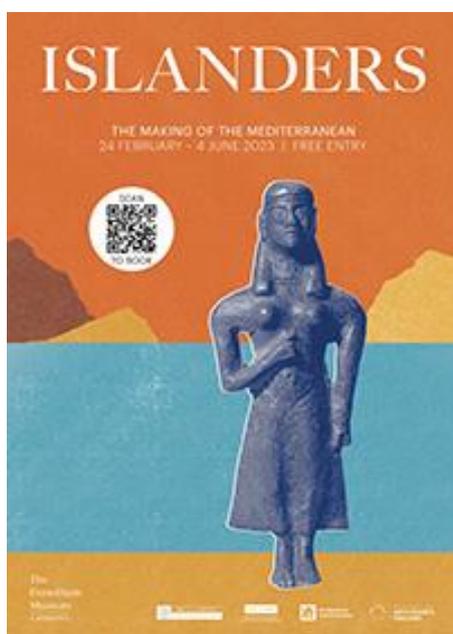
The documentary negotiates the ideas of insularity, mobility and timeless human presence in the Aegean, using the case of Sifnos as a research model. We used methodology from the fields of visual anthropology, empirical archeology and archeology of the senses, as well as ethnographic research in the field of island studies.

The documentary seeks to make visible the composition of the multifaceted forces that contributed to the diversity and multiple levels of memory of this human ecosystem. The present project attempts to break through the monothematic images of a nostalgic (tourist) Mediterranean and to give space to the narratives of its inhabitants. The polyphony of the islanders reminds us that the Aegean is not a picturesque outpost, the islands do not constitute a a delightful cloud-cuckoo-land (*Nephelocokygia*), they do not describe an abstraction of the "social". A mosaic of different voices invites us to unfold with it the coexistence of contrasts and convergences, the symbiosis of differences and similarities, reminding us of the value of bonds.

The filming lasted one and a half years with the active participation of twenty-six residents as well as scientific collaborators, Academic - post-doctoral researchers and technical consultants, who together answered the same questions: "What does it mean to be an islander?", "What role does the natural world play?" environment and the natural resources of the island, in shaping the island life and culture?", "How important is the intangible heritage and how does it manifest itself in the island reality?"

This interweaving and exchange of views, between the researchers and the community members, allowed their natural interaction, the participation of the community members in the research purposes of the project, and in shaping the results of the documentary. Island community members are not simply interviewees, as in older documentary practice, but are equal interviewers and influencers of the research subjects, thus making the documentary an exercise in community participation, co-creation and engagement, outside the confines of academia.

The documentary, generously supported by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, was produced with the kind permission of the Ministry of Culture, Greece and is under the auspices of the Municipality of Siphnos, region of Cyclades.



• Credits

‘Being an Islander’

Director: Dimitrios Bouras

Production: ArkLab Limited

Executive producers: Dimitrios Bouras, Anastasia Christophilopoulou

Co-producers: Orestis Seferoglou, Manos Makrigiannakis, Kostas Grountas

Directors of Photography: Orestis Seferoglou, Dimitrios Bouras

Editor: Manos Makrigiannakis

Scriptwriters: Valia Tsirigoti, Βάλια Τσιριγώτη, Anastasia Christophilopoulou, Dimitrios Bouras

Narrators: Valia Tsirigoti, Kostas Grountas

Original Music: Kostas Grountas

Violin: Fotis Siotas | Rhodes: Kostas Tsiolis | Recordings/Mixing: Giorgos Liapis

Mastering: Yiannis Christodoulatos, Sweetspot Productions

Art Director: Kostas Pappas | Production Design: Amalia Symeonidou

Aerial Photography: Orestis Seferoglou | Color Grading: Orestis Seferoglou

Illustrations: Christina Tsevis (Crosti) | Graphics: Evangelos Sarantaris (Don Forty)

Production Assistant Greece: Andriana Theochari | Production Assistant UK: Jack Stephenson

Production Controller: Moysis Moyseos | Accounting, Financial Consultants: Istos Global Limited

Lawyer: Nikoletta N. Charalambous

Principal researchers: Dr. Anastasia Christophilopoulou Dr. Dimitrios Bouras

• **Advisory Board**

Dr. Nicholas Anastasopoulos (Architecture)

Dr. Anastasia Christophilopoulou (Archaeology)

Dr. David Evans (Fitzwilliam Museum)

Dr. Dimitrios Kostopoulos (Geology)

Dr. Christos Lynteris (Anthropology)

Ms. Maria Nadali (Mayor of Sifnos)

Dr. Nikos Panagiotou (Communication – Media)

The documentary, generously supported by the Stavros Niarchos Foundation, was produced with the kind permission of the Ministry of Culture, Greece and is under the auspices of the Municipality of Siphnos, region of Cyclades

Special Thanks:

Dr. Nicholas Anastasopoulos, Dr. Dimitrios Kostopoulos, Dr. Ezra Barzilay

Municipality of Sifnos, Citizens of Sifnos.

McDonald Institute for Archaeological Research, University of Cambridge.

National & Kapodistrian University of Athens, Dept of Mineralogy & Petrology.

ZANTE ferries (official carrier)

Cultural Center of Sifnos, Antonis Atsonios Pottery, Vathy, Sifnos.

The archaeological areas of Aghios Andreas, Sifnos pertain to the jurisdiction of the Ephorate of antiquities of the Cyclades.

All rights of the presented monuments / archaeological areas belong to:

© Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sports Hellenic Organization of Cultural Resources Development.

<https://filmfreeway.com/BeinganIslander>

Genres:

Anthropology, Ethnography, History, Social Issues, Human Concerns, Social Impact, Insularity

- **promotional material** *available upon request at: dbouras@gmail.com

a. Poster - Banners

a.1. Official poster

BaI_poster_Award_A3_300ppi_.jpg [3543x5061px 300ppi]

BaI_poster_Award_23x33_150ppi [1365x1950px 150ppi]

a.2. Being an Islander - Social Media Banner

BaI_Banner_TiDF25_Award_72ppi [1920x1440px 72ppi]

a.3. TiDF25 “Fischer Audience Award” Social Media Banner

BaI_Awards_TiDF25_1000x1000

b. Photos – movie stills

b.1. Movie clips/stills

>>Includes nine (9) files:

01 b3_BaI_Clip0149_150ppi.jpg

01 b3_BaI_Clip0149-AudienceAward_150ppi

02 b3_BaI_Clip151_72.jpg

03 b3_BaI_Clip0115_72-02.jpg

04 b3_BaI_Clip0210_72-02.jpg

05 b3_BaI_Clip0215_72-02.jpg

06 b3_BaI_Clip0300_72-02.jpg

07 b3_BaI_Clip0516_72-02.jpg

08 b3_BaI_Clip9900_150ppi.jpg

b.2. Director:

_DSC5492_150.jpg [1650x1266px 150ppi]

*Credit: © Louisa Gouliamaki / AFP [2022]

• **Additional Press Material:**

Images: Poster – Banner, Documentary stills, Behind-the-scenes (BTS), Landscape, etc. in high resolution (300ppi) provided upon request at: dbouras@gmail.com

Vimeo web links

1. Documentary (68min:14sec)

<https://vimeo.com/826939506>

Password: Bai221020

2. Trailer [02’:24”]

<https://vimeo.com/834565296>

NO password required.

3. Teasers – Excerpts (NO password required.)

3.1 “Islanders” (01’:09”) <https://vimeo.com/777889894>

3.2 “Islanders” Excerpt (03’:26”) <https://vimeo.com/784381647>

3.3 “The Sea 01” (01’:34”) <https://vimeo.com/784382984>

3.4 “The Sea 02” (00’:33”) <https://vimeo.com/777890008>

3.5 “Water” (01’:04”) <https://vimeo.com/784382879>

3.6 “Sustainability” (00’:44”) <https://vimeo.com/777890215>

3.7 “Sustainability” Excerpt (02’:37”) <https://vimeo.com/784382671>

3.8 “Insularity” (01’:11”) <https://vimeo.com/784382379>

3.9 “Material Culture – Heritage” (01’:06”) <https://vimeo.com/784382466>

• **Movie clips/stills – thumbnails**

Images in a *.zip file ~9MB

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01 b3_BaI_Clip0149-AudienceAward_150ppi



02 b3_BaI_Clip151_72.jpg



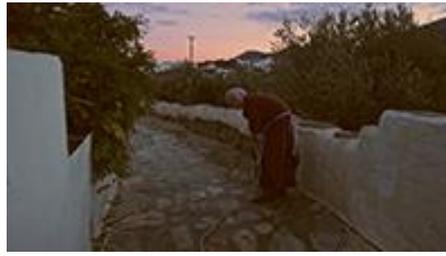
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05 b3_BaI_Clip0215_72-02.jpg



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07 b3_BaI_Clip0516_72-02.jpg



08 b3_BaI_Clip9900_150ppi.jpg



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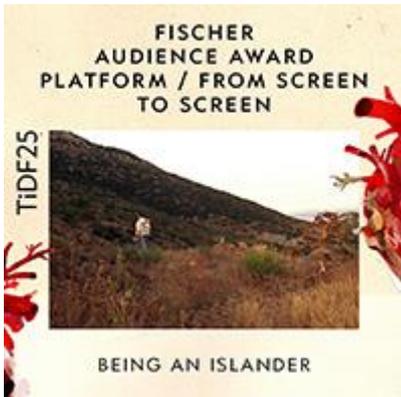
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Indian Independent Film Festival
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